AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Currently Amended) A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database

having ~~various~~ a plurality of masters, and a server for controlling data communications with

a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the ~~various~~

plurality of masters in response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided

from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the respective items; and

[[an MD]] a merchandise assortment (MD) related master in which is registered, as

~~merchandise assortment (MD)~~ MD related information, a list of traded items, whose trades have

been agreed upon beforehand between [[that]] the customer and dealer, among those items

stored in [[that]] the merchandise master, for each purchase unit of the customer and for each

dealer providing the items to [[that]] the customer; and

wherein the server comprises an item replacing controller for, when an item stored in the

merchandise master is to be replaced with an item that is a replaceable item but is not contained

in the MD related information, controlling the replacement of items provided to the dealers

from the customers, according to an automatic replace level defined beforehand in the MD

related information.

2.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein the item replacement

controller comprises a price balance oriented determining function, ~~and that function~~ which

determines whether ~~or not~~ to automatically implement a replacement in the MD related

information, according to the automatic replace level, and to a price difference between a price

of new item and a price of old item, that being a price to the customer from the dealer.

3.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein the item

replacement controller comprises a price form oriented determining function, ~~and that~~

~~function~~ which determines whether ~~or not~~ to automatically implement a replacement in the

MD related information, according to a difference of whether an item price specifying form

from the dealer to the customer is a negotiated ratio for an item group or a negotiated price

for an individual item, and to the automatic replace level.

4.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein the server

comprises an item replacing unit for, when an order for an item for which a new item

number has been defined in the MD related information by the item replacement controller

is placed from a terminal used by a user belonging to the purchasing unit, making ~~item~~

~~replaced in that~~ the item defined by the new item number an object of the order ~~placement~~.

5.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein the item

replacement controller comprises a deliverer specific out of production controlling

function, [[and]]

        wherein said function, when [[the]] an old item has been taken out of production

by [[the]] a supplier, specifies a deliverer for delivering [[that]] the old item to be taken

out of production to [[a]] the customer, with reference to the MD related information; and

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[[that]] the old item is logically deleted from the MD related information when

[[that]] the deliverer is not a dealer; and, when [[that]] the deliverer is a dealer, prompts

user of [[that]] the dealer to reflect [[that]] the out of production item in MD related

information.

6.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 1, wherein the item

replacement controller comprises:

        a new item storing function for, when an item replacement has been designated by

the customer in response to a proposal to adopt a new product made to [[that]] the

customer, storing a new item number designated by [[that]] the customer in old MD data

of MD related information used between [[that]] the customer and the dealer; and

    a new MD data storing function for storing new MD data for [[a]] the new item

number in the MD related information.

7.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 6, wherein the item

replacement controller comprises a duplication error output function, and that function

which outputs a duplication error, when the new item number is stored by the new item

storing function in the MD related information, when dealers for [[same]] the customer are

redundant for [[that]] the new item number.

8.   (Currently Amended) A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database

having various masters at least one master, and a server for controlling data communications

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with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the

~~various masters~~ at least one master in response to requests from the terminals;

wherein the database comprises a merchandise master in which is registered information

relating to items provided to a customer by item numbers unique to those items; and

wherein the server comprises an item replacement controller for, when an item stored

in the merchandise master is to be replaced with a replaceable item, controls replacement of

item provided to the customer according to automatic replace level defined beforehand for

each of the customers.

9.   (Currently Amended) A method for controlling item replacement using an order

placing system~~, said order placing system~~ comprising a database ~~wherein are stored various~~

~~masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a~~

~~network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests~~

~~from the terminals;~~

~~wherein the database comprises:~~

~~a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items such as~~

~~goods or services provided from a supplier through a retail outlet or other dealer to a~~

~~customer, for each unique item number for those items; and~~

~~an MD related master in which is registered~~ containing merchandise assortment (MD)

related information comprising a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon

beforehand between [[that]] a customer and dealer~~, among those items stored in that~~

~~merchandise master, as MD related information.~~ for each purchase unit of the customer, for

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each dealer providing the ~~items; and~~ items, the replacement control method ~~comprises the~~ ~~steps of~~ comprising:

(a) specifying beforehand a replacement form, when an item among items provided from the dealer to a customer is to be replaced by a new item, as an automatic replace level, for each set of MD related information wherein unit thereof is made a list of those items handled;

(b) referencing ~~a certain~~ an automatic replace level, when a proposal for adopting a new product ~~or the like~~ has been made to the customer by a sales activity entity, ~~entity such as~~ ~~a supplier or dealer or the like, namely~~ the automatic replace level being defined in MD related information for [[that]] the customer;

(c) defining a form for determining a price of an old item, based on the MD related information, before or after step (b);

(d) calculating a price difference between price of the old item and a price of a new item, when the price of [[that]] the new item can be calculated, based on the price determining form specified in step (c); and

(e) determining whether ~~or not~~ to implement an item replacement, or whether ~~or not~~ a query is to be made to the dealer, according to a combination of whether ~~or not~~ a price calculation was made in step (d), [[that]] the price difference when such was calculated, and the automatic replace level.

10.   (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 9, wherein the item replacement ~~enable/disable~~ step in (e) determines whether ~~or not~~ to implement item replacement based on

the price difference calculated in the price difference calculation step in (d) when the automatic replace level is at a level where [[most]] an automatic determination is made.

11.   (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 9, wherein the item replacement enable/disable step in (e) prompts negotiation between the customer and the dealer concerning whether or not to perform the item replacement according to the price difference calculated in the price difference calculation step in (d), when the automatic replace level is at a level where [[most]] an automatic determination is made.

12.   (Currently Amended) A Computer computer program product comprising a recording medium storing a program for controlling item replacement using an order placing system;

wherein the order placing system comprises a database which stores various a plurality of masters, and a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various plurality of masters in response to requestsd from the terminals;

the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items; and

[[an MD]] a merchandise assortment (MD) related master in which is registered comprising a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between [[that]] the customer and dealer, among those items stored in [[that]] the merchandise master,

as MD related information for each purchase unit of the customer, and for each dealer

providing the items to [[that]] the customer; and

wherein the program for item replacement control causes the server to:

specify a replacement form, when an item among handled items provided from the

dealer to [[a]] the customer is to be replaced by a new item, as an automatic replace level,

for each set of MD related information in which unit thereof is made a list of those items

handled;

reference the automatic replace level defined in the MD related information for

[[that]] the customer, when a proposal for adopting a new product or the like has been

made to the customer by a sales activity entity for the customer such as supplier or dealer

or the like; reference the MD related information and specify a form for determining a

price of an old item;

calculate price difference between price of old item and price of new item, when price

of [[that]] the new item can be calculated, based on specified price determining form; and

determine whether or not to implement item replacement, or whether or not a query is

to be made to the dealer, according to combination of whether or not a price calculation was

made, [[that]] the price difference when such was calculated, and the automatic replace level.

13.   (Currently Amended) A system for placing orders for items, comprising a database

wherein are stored various a plurality of masters, and a server for controlling data

communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data

to or from the various plurality of masters in response to requests from the terminals;

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wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items;

[[an MD]] a merchandise assortment (MD) related master which a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between [[that]] the customer and dealer, among those items stored in [[that]] the merchandise master, as MD related information. information, for each purchase unit of the customer and for each dealer providing the items to [[that]] the customer;

an item replacement master for managing the replacement of item numbers, item by item, proposed by a sales activity entity for the customer such as a supplier or dealer of items provided to the customer; and

an item replacement judgment master for managing condition of advance of item replacements stored in [[that]] the item replacement master; and

wherein the server comprises:

an automatic replace level storage controller for storing an automatic replace level determined beforehand between [[that]] the customer and dealer in the MD related information when the MD related information is stored in the MD related master;

an item specific item replacement storage controller which, when replacement of an item stored in the merchandise master is proposed by the sales activity entity, stores the old item number of [[that]] the item replacement and a new item number that is a new item in the item replacement master;

a replacement object extraction controller which, after the old and new item numbers

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have been stored in the item replacement master, extracts the MD related information in which [[that]] the old item number is assorted from the MD related information;

an MD specific item replacement determinator for determining whether ~~or not~~ to automatically implement an item replacement, for each set of MD related information, based on an automatic replacement implementation level stored in the MD related information extracted by [[that]] the replacement object extraction controller;

an automatic replacement controller which, when it has been determined by [[that]] the MD specific item replacement determinator to perform an item replacement automatically, stores the new item number in the MD data specified by the old item number in plurality of sets of MD data in [[that]] the MD related information; and

a replacement study controller which, when it has been determined by the MD specific item replacement determinator not to perform an automatic item replacement, prompts the dealer corresponding to [[that]] the MD related information to store information relating to [[that]] the item replacement.

14.   (Currently Amended) The system according to claim 13, wherein the automatic replace level defined in each of the sets of MD related information is one ~~or other~~ of a verification scheme level, intermediate scheme level, and automatic scheme level;

the verification scheme level is an automatic replace level that automatically performs replacement when there is no change in prices to the customer between old and new items, and prompts the dealer managing [[that]] the MD related information to input a price when price of the new item is higher or lower than the price of the old item;

the intermediate scheme level is an automatic replace level that, when there is a

rate and an actual amount as schemes for determining prices to the customer, performs

automatic replacement irrespective of the price difference between the old and new items

when [[that]] the determining scheme is a rate, but urges deal managing [[that]] the MD

related information to input a price when price of the new item is higher or lower than

price of the old item;

the automatic scheme level is an automatic replace level that determines whether or

not to perform item replacement according to classifications determined beforehand

according to the price difference between old and new items, irrespective of scheme for

determining price to the customer, without requiring the dealer to input a price; and

the MD specific item replacement controller comprises:

an automatic replace level specific determining function for determining whether or

not to implement an item replacement according to the automatic replace level scheme; and

a price input control function for prompting the dealer to store information relating to

[[that]] the item replacement when it has been determined by [[that]] the automatic replace

level determining function that storage and the like of a price by [[that]] the dealer [[are]] is

necessary.

15.   (Currently Amended) A system that places orders for items, comprising a database

wherein are stored various a plurality of masters, and a server for controlling data

communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to

or from the various plurality of masters in response to requests from the terminals;

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wherein the database comprises:

a merchandise master in which is registered information relating to items provided from a dealer to a customer, for each unique item number for the items; and

[[an MD]] a merchandise assortment (MD) related master in which is registered comprising a list of traded items whose trades have been agreed upon beforehand between [[that]] the customer and dealer, among those items stored in [[that]] the merchandise master, as MD related information for each purchase unit of the customer and for each dealer providing the items to [[that]] the customer; and

the server comprises:

a received order item replacing controller that, when an order placement request for ordering an item is received from a terminal used by a user belonging to the purchasing unit, references the MD related information, and, when a new item number is stored in [[that]] the item, notifies user for receiving order for item of [[that]] the new item number; and

an out of production item order changing controller for, when the MD related information is referenced and the item number for which the order placement request was received has gone out of production, prompting the user to change or cancel the order placed for [[that]] the item.

16. (Currently Amended) Order placement data used in a system that controls order placing and receiving between a customer to whom a user using a terminal belongs and a dealer providing items such as goods or services to [[that]] the customer, wherein

the order placing and receiving system comprises:

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a database storing ~~various~~ a plurality of masters; and

a server for controlling data communications with a plurality of terminals via a network, and extracting or storing data to or from the various masters in response to requests from the terminals;

[[the]] order ~~placing and receiving system~~ placement data [[are]] used by the order placing and receiving system for specifying a dealer handling an item ordered by a user; and

the order placement data ~~comprise~~ comprising:

a data structure consisting of [[MD]] a merchandise assortment (MD) related master data;

a data structure consisting of MD unit master data; and

a data structure consisting of MD master data;

the MD related master data [[have]] comprising:

an MD unit master wherein is stored an MD unit data group indicating an MD list defined for the dealer and each of the purchasing units of the customer; and

an MD master wherein is stored an MD data group wherein is stored information relating to distribution of items belonging to the MD unit in each of those MD units;

wherein the MD master data [[have]] including an automatic replace level for specifying a replacement form when performing a replacement of an item stored in the merchandise master in each of those MD units by an item that is a replaceable item and that is not contained in the MD related information; and

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the MD related master data have new item number data in [[that]] the item

number belonging to [[that]] the MD related information when item replacement has

been performed for an item according to the automatic replace level.

17 – 30 (Canceled)